

HERITAGE PRESERVATION | SENSE OF PLACE | ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION | GROWTH PREPAREDNESS | APPROPRIATE
BUSINESSES | EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES | HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES | LOCAL SELF-DETERMINATION | REGIONAL
COOPERATION | SHARED SOLUTIONS | EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS | REGIONAL IDENTITY | INFILL
DEVELOPMENT | TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS | OPENSOURCE PRESERVATION | TRANSPORTATION
ALTERNATIVES | GROWTH PREPAREDNESS | BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES | EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES | HOUSING
OPPORTUNITIES | LOCAL SELF-DETERMINATION | REGIONAL COOPERATION | SHARED SOLUTIONS | EMPLOYMENT
OPTIONS | REGIONAL IDENTITY | INFILL DEVELOPMENT | TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS | OPENSOURCE
PRESERVATION | TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES | HERITAGE PRESERVATION | SENSE OF PLACE | ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION | GROWTH PREPAREDNESS | BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES | EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES | HOUSING
OPPORTUNITIES | LOCAL SELF-DETERMINATION | REGIONAL COOPERATION | SHARED SOLUTIONS | EMPLOYMENT
OPTIONS | REGIONAL IDENTITY | INFILL DEVELOPMENT | TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS | OPENSOURCE



GQGP Resource Team Report

Warner Robins

July, 2002

IDENTITY | INFILL DEVELOPMENT | TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS | OPENSOURCE PRESERVATION | TRANSPORTATION
ALTERNATIVES | GROWTH PREPAREDNESS | BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES | EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES | HOUSING
OPPORTUNITIES | LOCAL SELF-DETERMINATION | REGIONAL COOPERATION | SHARED SOLUTIONS | EMPLOYMENT
OPTIONS | REGIONAL IDENTITY | INFILL DEVELOPMENT | TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS | OPENSOURCE
PRESERVATION | TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES | HERITAGE PRESERVATION | SENSE OF PLACE | ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION | GROWTH PREPAREDNESS | BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES | EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES | HOUSING



Introduction

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS

WARNER ROBINS *Introduction* WARNER ROBINS *Introduction*

Introduction

The Quality Growth Resource Team for Warner Robins was brought together in July, 2002 through a collaboration with the City of Warner Robins, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership, a state-wide coalition of government agencies, universities, non-profits and business groups working to provide technical assistance on “smart growth” issues to Georgia communities. The resource team focused their study on the intown areas of Warner Robins, generally bounded by Highway 247 and Robins Air Force Base to the east, Russell Parkway on the south, Pleasant Hill Road on the west, and Green Street on the north.

The multidisciplinary team was made up of specialists in city planning, real estate development, urban design, historic preservation, architecture, resource conservation, and housing. Team members were chosen with the area’s particular concerns in mind, which were initially defined in a meeting with the local officials held weeks in advance of the actual team visit.

The team spent a week in the project area. The visit began with a facilitated meeting involving a broad cross section of community representatives, designed to give the team members a deeper understanding of development issues and needs of the project area. During the week the team toured the project area by bus, visited area buildings, spoke with local officials, reviewed local ordinances, conducted field surveys, prepared schematic design solutions, and formulated policy recommendations. The visit culminated with a final presentation to the public on Friday, July 19th. The team’s recommendations were then passed to DCA staff for formatting into this final report.

The Resource Team would like to thank the City of Warner Robins’ staff, the Downtown Development Authority, elected officials and citizens for making us feel so welcome in the area. The ideas and solutions proposed here are only a beginning – intended to stimulate interest in redeveloping Warner Robins’ intown areas so that residents may enjoy living in a vibrant and beautiful section of the city.

Meet the Resource Team



Team Members

Lily Barrios
Sizemore Group

John Cheek
Glatting Jackson Atlanta

Phillip Clark
Georgia Planning Association

Bill de Saint Aubin
Sizemore Group

Doug Dillard
Dillard & Galloway, LLC

Brian Hendry
Moore Bass Consulting, Inc.

Gaile Jennings
Jennings Downtown Consulting

Kent Kirbow
DCA Housing Development

Dion Moten
Jordan, Jones & Goulding

Sue Tilden
DCA Coordinated Planning

Support Staff

Julie Brown
DCA Quality Growth

Jan Coyne
University of Georgia

Steve Dempsey
University of Georgia

Stan Ellis
DCA Region 4 Office

Jim Frederick
DCA Quality Growth

Walter Kawa
University of Georgia

Stephanie Shelton
University of Georgia

Evan Thibeault
University of Georgia

Adriane Wood
DCA Region 6 Office

Annaka Woodruff
DCA Region 12 Office

Georgia Quality Growth Partnership



The Georgia Quality Growth Partnership (GQGP) is a collaboration among diverse public and private organizations formed out of the desire to coordinate their efforts at promoting “quality growth” approaches throughout the State of Georgia. The primary purpose of the GQGP is to facilitate local government implementation of quality growth approaches by:

1. Disseminating objective information on the various approaches.
2. Developing tools for implementing these approaches.
3. Sharing of best practices learned from other places, times, and cultures.
4. Promoting acceptance of quality growth by the general public and community leaders.

Founded in March, 2000, the GQGP has grown to more than forty organizations, each contributing time, in kind services, or financial resources to fostering Partnership efforts.

Guiding Principles

The GQGP members believe that fostering livable communities requires innovative solutions that:

1. Ensure equitable access for all citizens to a range of options for education, transportation, housing, employment, human services, culture, and recreation.
2. Create opportunities for citizens to learn more about community planning and actively encourage their involvement in public decision-making.
3. Respect and protect our natural resources – wildlife, land, water, air and trees.
4. Shape appealing physical environments that enhance walkability and positive social interaction.
5. Recognize that community decisions have an impact on neighboring jurisdictions and, therefore, must be made from a responsible regional and statewide perspective.
6. Incorporate practices learned from our local experience as well as from other communities and cultures.
7. Preserve and enhance our cultural and historic places for future generations.
8. Provide for the efficient and economical use of public infrastructure.
9. Employ the principles of sustainability and balance to ensure the economic viability of all communities and to enhance the state’s economic competitiveness.





Observations

Observations

The City of Warner Robins is an energetic, young town by American standards. Incorporated during World War II in the heart of Georgia's farmland, the town has existed to serve Robins Air Force Base ever since. As the town grew west from the base, it did so at the rapid pace of the automobile, rather than at the two-legged pace of human beings like older communities in the region. By necessity, Warner Robins expanded quickly, constructing its roads, buildings and public facilities for function rather than form.

This does not mean that the city is totally lacking in historic resources. The Resource Team found some historic resources in Warner Robins, primarily located along Watson Boulevard with resources scattered in adjacent residential neighborhoods. A major concentration of historic structures is located at the intersection of Watson Boulevard and Davis Drive, at Commercial Circle and Robins Manor, where development occurred primarily between 1942 and 1953. The buildings along Commercial Circle appear to have been constructed starting in 1943, following construction at Robins Manor that began in 1942.

For many years it seems, a sense of impermanence pervaded the town, as the long-term future of the air base remained uncertain. This uncertainty about the future is reflected in the haphazardly constructed, poorly planned development patterns throughout most of the community.

Today, the future of Robins Air Force Base seems assured, and the citizens of Warner Robins have become secure in the permanence of their town and are ready to create a more vibrant, pleasant community.

The Resource Team identified several districts or focus areas that offer potential for creative redevelopment in Warner Robins:

- Commercial Circle
- Civic Corridor (City Hall, Macon College, Library)
- First Street
- Village At Town Center (Tech Park)
- North Gate Shopping Center
- Intown Neighborhoods
- Highway Corridors
- Greenspace and Pedestrian/Bikeways

Each of these districts or focus areas are discussed in more detail below, followed by observations about how the city is organized to take advantage of such redevelopment opportunities.

Commercial Circle

Strengths

- City owned property can be improved and maintained at city's discretion.
- Flat terrain can accommodate attractive site planning.
- The Downtown Development Authority is strong and committed to downtown redevelopment, with a willingness to consider new development ideas.
- Strong location features including proximity to Robins Air Force Base, roadway and potential rail transportation corridor, schools and college.
- Some defining architectural elements have been established.
- Original city center of Warner Robins, and has potential to return to that status.
- Core of historic buildings eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Architecture and street layout unique to the 1940s and the rise of the automobile culture.
- Small area makes walking feasible and potentially enjoyable.

Weaknesses

- Empty storefronts and use of buildings for storage create an unpleasant environment.
- No current commercial uses promote walking.
- Sidewalks and streets in disrepair.
- No greenery or trees anywhere in sight.
- Limited connectivity to surrounding city fabric.
- Lack of supporting city amenities geared toward needs and desires of citizens.
- Lack of nearby residential choices, both price and type, that would provide critical mass of customers.

Threats

- Development impetus to the west and south as sprawl in the outlying areas of Warner Robins directs energy and population away from the downtown.
- Perception by several stakeholders that Commercial Circle should be razed.
- Continued inattention will result in complete decay of area.
- Property owners that may be unwilling to sell or rehab.
- Inappropriate commercial uses that detract from the area's charm.
- No anchor business to inspire small businesses to locate nearby.

Civic Corridor

Strengths

- City owned property can be improved and maintained at city's discretion.
- Community spaces and city facilities are established and familiar to the community already.
- Some architectural elements have been established.
- Easily walkable distance to Commercial Circle and other activity nodes.
- Large existing greenspaces that are easily improvable.

Weaknesses

- Limited connectivity to surrounding city fabric.
- Lack of residential choices in the area, both price and type, as alternatives to single family residences.
- Large expanses of pavement (parking and roadways) make walking unpleasant.
- Lack of landscaping and shade limit area's natural beauty and walkability.
- Current limited use of civic space by citizens.
- No current design ordinance to protect integrity of remaining green areas, may result in increase of the "hot asphalt."

Threats

- Development impetus to the west and south as sprawl in the outlying areas of Warner Robins directs energy and population away from the downtown area.
- Without redevelopment efforts in nearby commercial districts, civic district will remain an isolated island.
- Inappropriate commercial uses along Watson Boulevard detract from area's charm.
- Possible erosion of nearby residential areas will increase negative perceptions.

First Street

Strengths

- Conveniently located directly across from Robins Air Force Base, presenting opportunity to offer unique dining, entertainment, or other services to meet the daily needs of the base population.
- Located at the front door to Warner Robins from Highway 247.

- Also surrounded by residential areas to the west, offering opportunity to draw on this market in addition to the base population.
- Was traditionally a commercial area, with a few of these buildings remaining available for reuse for commercial purposes.
- Flat terrain can accommodate attractive site planning
- Small area makes walking feasible and potentially enjoyable.

Weaknesses

- Empty and dilapidated buildings create an unpleasant environment.
- Historically perceived as an unsafe part of town.
- Currently insufficient commercial uses to draw large numbers of visitors to the area.
- Sidewalks and streets in disrepair.
- Not enough greenery or trees to make walking pleasant.
- Surrounding neighborhoods are currently declining and unattractive.
- Lack of nearby residential choices, both price and type, that could provide critical mass of customers.

Threats

- Development impetus to the west and south as sprawl in the outlying areas of Warner Robins directs energy and population away from the First Street area.
- History of the area may perpetuate local perception that this area is not suitable for nice restaurants, entertainment of similar commercial activities.
- Continued inattention will result in complete decay of area.
- Property owners that may be unwilling to sell or rehab.
- Inappropriate commercial uses that detract from area's charm.
- No anchor business to inspire small businesses to locate nearby.

Village At Town Center

Strengths

- Size of development area is ample and location is in good proximity to the downtown.
- Terrain and lake can accommodate attractive site planning.

- Strong location features including proximity to Robins Air Force Base, roadway and potential rail transportation corridor, schools and college.
- Community spaces and city facilities are nearby.

Weaknesses

- Some lack of attention to site maintenance: entry sign is in disrepair, mowing and weeding is needed and eroded land, especially around lagoons, should be addressed.
- Lack of sufficient marketing of the site for new development opportunities.
- Limited connectivity to surrounding city fabric.
- Lack of supporting city amenities geared toward needs and desires of high tech work force.
- Lack of nearby residential choices, both price and type, as alternatives to single family residences.

Threats

- Some stakeholders' perception that a mix of uses is to be avoided at this site.
- Competition from Osigian Technology Park, which includes: the Georgia Tech Advanced Technology Development Center and the Mercer Engineering and Research Center. The Houston County Development Authority has already built several spec buildings and does extensive marketing of the facilities.
- Development impetus to the west and south as sprawl in the outlying areas of Warner Robins directs energy and population away from the downtown.
- Removal by relocation of key downtown functions: Chamber of Commerce, the Middle School, as well as grocery stores and other essential commercial enterprises.

Northgate Shopping Center

Strengths

- Proximity to existing residential, commercial areas, and city facilities.
- Residential areas nearby create a critical mass of potential customers.
- Size of development area is ample for development of new structures.
- Flat terrain can accommodate attractive site planning.

Weaknesses

- Some lack of attention to site maintenance.

- Commercial uses that are incompatible with “urban center” concept.
- Perception of the area as an undesirable location.
- Vacant storefronts detract from existing businesses.
- Distance between Davis Drive and existing buildings creates an uninviting atmosphere for potential customers.
- Lack of landscaping reinforces “sea of asphalt” appearance.

Threats

- Without concentrated redevelopment efforts, the area will continue to decline as businesses relocate to the west side of town.

Intown Neighborhoods

Attributes of a stable residential neighborhood:

- Self-containment - a defined boundary.
- Maintains a distinct identity-through architectural style, lot and street design.
- Quality development along the neighborhood’s periphery.
- Mixed income residents.
- Predominance of homeownership.
- Residents maintain property (residents have pride where they live) houses painted, yard landscaped, no junk or abandoned vehicles in yard, little or no overgrowth.

Example of neighborhood with these attributes –

Warner Robins Manor:

- The neighborhood has a defined boundary.
- The neighborhood has a distinct identity.
- Exterior - most of houses have shingled exteriors, though some are bricked.
- Street design - the interior streets are curved which enter onto a straight residential collector.
- Architectural design.
- Most of the housing is of the 40’s box-design, relatively small by today’s standards on small lots.
- Periphery development.
- Uses surrounding the Manor subdivision include mainly recently constructed office and residential structures that are on well-maintained lots.
- Home ownership:
The overall appearance of the neighborhood and many individual properties lends to the assumption that there is high percentage of home ownership in the neighborhood.

- Neighborhood pride:
The appearance of the neighborhood (maintenance of exterior structure and yard, absence of abandoned vehicles) leaves the general impression that residents take great pride in where they live.

Attributes of a declining residential neighborhood:

- Lack of a defined boundary – difficult determining where neighborhood begins and ends. Poor street design and/or the invasion of different type and intensity of use can cause this.
- Lack of neighborhood identity – changes in land use development or being in close proximity to more intensive uses can cause the neighborhood to lose its distinct identity.
- Incompatible periphery uses – declining neighborhoods are usually surrounded by periphery development that is not compatible with the residential uses, many of which are also in decline.
- Reduction in home ownership rates – in most cases, as a neighborhood declines, the transition from owner-occupied to renter-occupied units increases. There is also likelihood that there will be greater intrusion of duplex and multi-family dwellings.
- Declining housing quality and neighborhood appearance – because of the growing number of absentee landlords and the lack of personal investment (money, interest) in the neighborhood by the residents, the condition of the structures as well as the appearance of the neighborhood (junk and trash in yards, overgrowth on vacant lots) declines. There is no longer an interest in “shared responsibility.”

Example of neighborhood with these attributes – Area south of Green Street between Wellborn/Sixth Street and Highway 247:

- Lack of neighborhood boundary – it is hard to determine where this neighborhood begins or ends because there is no distinctive subdivision design. Poor roadway connectivity makes it difficult to traverse the neighborhood either on foot or by car.
- Lack of neighborhood identity – duplexes and multi-family apartments have been allowed to be developed haphazardly in close proximity to single-family homes. This causes the neighborhood to lose its specific identity and creates a disincentive for homeowners to improve their property.
- Incompatible periphery development – heavy commercial/industrial uses that create noise and air pollution and have unsightly outside storage bordering this residential

area to east along Highway 247. Lack of buffering between the industrial area and the neighborhood takes away from the residential character of the area. Several of these high intensity uses are located in structures that appear to be in disrepair.

- Substandard housing conditions – many of the residential units within this neighborhood appear to be in substandard condition. A number of structures, which are not suitable to rehabilitate, have been demolished or in the process of being eliminated. There are other structures in the neighborhood that would appear to be candidates for demolition, but they are occupied and will require current residents to first be relocated.
- Neighborhood appearance – junk cars, trash, and overgrowth can be found throughout the neighborhood. Along several of the streets overgrown vegetation can be found along the rights-of-way.

Major Highway Corridors

Substantial amounts of unattractive strip development currently exist along all of Warner Robins' major highway corridors. This domination of automobile culture is typical of new development in most Georgia communities, but some new techniques have been developed for improving upon this modern form of blight.

Many of the city's primary arterial roads feature center turn medians, often called "suicide lanes," that can lead to traffic accidents and congestion delays.

A trend toward greater suburbanization of retail uses is evident with the movement of Wal-Mart further out of town and the general decline of retail uses in the commercial core. This outward movement of retail uses is also precipitated by the construction of major road improvements. In general, far too much land along major roadways in Warner Robins and the surrounding county is zoned to allow commercial development.

Continued westward sprawl of office and commercial uses, if left unaddressed, will surely undercut the city's efforts to promote revitalization of the downtown area. Furthermore, it can be expected that these newer strip developments will also deteriorate over time, eventually becoming much like older sections of Watson Boulevard and Davis Drive are today.

Green Space and Pedestrian/Bikeways

There is a lack of greenspace throughout the city, particularly along the major highway corridors. Generally, more trees, landscaping and buffer areas could help make Warner Robins a more attractive community.

Lack of sidewalks or walkways restricts pedestrian access to commercial and recreational areas. Where sidewalks or walkways do exist, they generally do not connect to each other or form a continuous pedestrian link to major destinations, such as commercial and recreational areas.

Organization

The Downtown Development Authority is clearly strong and committed to downtown redevelopment, with a willingness to consider new development ideas.

However, the Downtown Development Authority's redevelopment district may be too large to enable effective redevelopment. The Authority's resources may simply be stretched too thin by trying to take on such a large redevelopment area.

It also appears that the Downtown Development Authority has had a major focus on residential area redevelopment, while redevelopment of the commercial core of the community is the typical focus of such organizations.

The Downtown Development Authority is operating from an out-of-date redevelopment plan for the area. As a result, the Authority appears to focus its efforts on specific redevelopment opportunities as they arise.

There apparently has been no market analysis of the right business mix to be promoted for the Warner Robins' downtown area. There appear to be major gaps in the businesses and services available in the downtown area and for surrounding residents.